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IEMA Cautions “When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors”

Lightning Safety Awareness Week is June 19-25

SPRINGFIELD – “When thunder roars, go indoors” is more than a catchy phrase about lightning safety. It’s a reminder that you’re at risk of being struck by lightning if you’re outdoors and can hear thunder. That’s the message the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA), the National Weather Service (NWS) and local emergency management agencies will promote during Lightning Safety Awareness Week June 19-22.

“We all enjoy being outdoors on beautiful summer days,” said IEMA Director James K. Joseph. “But don’t push your luck when thunderstorms are in the area. There’s absolutely no picnic, golf game or other outdoor activity that’s worth risking your life.”

Joseph added it’s important to remain inside a substantial building or hard-topped vehicle for 30 minutes after the last sound of thunder.

According to the NWS, there were no lightning-related fatalities in Illinois in 2015. Nationwide, 27 people were killed by lightning. The fatalities occurred while people were fishing, working, walking, camping, riding motorcycles, under or near trees, or participating in other outdoor activities.

“To date, all of the lightning fatalities in the U.S. have occurred outdoors,” said Heather Stanley, meteorologist with the NWS office in Lincoln. “Checking the weather forecast should be a step in planning any outdoor activity. But most importantly, don’t hesitate to act if you hear thunder. No place is safe outside in a thunderstorm.”

While fewer than 10 percent of people who are struck by lightning are killed, many lightning strike survivors suffer various degrees of disability. Only a few lightning strike victims actually suffer burns, and these are usually minor. However, many lightning strike survivors are left with debilitating life-long effects, including memory loss, personality changes, fatigue, irreparable nerve damage, chronic pain and/or headaches, difficulty sleeping and dizziness.

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People shouldn't hesitate to help someone who has been struck by lightning since victims do not carry an electrical charge. The surge of electricity through a lightning victim's body causes cardiac arrest in most fatalities, so immediate medical attention is critical. If the victim doesn't have a pulse and isn't breathing, CPR should be administered immediately.

For additional tips on lightning safety visit the Ready Illinois website at www.Ready.Illinois.gov.